

**Standard USHC-2:** The student will demonstrate an understanding of the establishment of the United States as a new nation.

**Indicator:**

USHC-2.2 Explain the impact of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution on the American colonies and on the world at large. (H, P, E)

**Taxonomy Level:** 2 B. Understand Conceptual Knowledge

**Previous/future knowledge:**

In 4th grade, students explained some of the political and economic factors leading to the American Revolution (4-3.1). They summarized the roles of principal American, British, and European leaders involved in the conflict (4-3.2). They explained the major ideas and philosophies of government reflected in the Declaration of Independence (4-3.3). They also summarized the events and key battles of the Revolutionary War (4-3.4) and then they compared the roles and accomplishments of early leaders in the development of the new nation (4-4.4). Illustrate how the ideals of equality as described in the Declaration of Independence were slow to take hold as evident in the Three-Fifths Compromise and the Fugitive Slave Acts (4-4.6).

In the 8th grade, they explained the interests and roles of South Carolinians in the events leading to the American Revolution and the role of the four South Carolina signers of the Declaration of Independence (8-2.1). They compared the perspectives and roles of different groups of South Carolinians during the American Revolution (8-2.2). Also, they summarized the course and key conflicts of the American Revolution in South Carolina and its effects on the state (8-2.3).

**It is essential for students to know:**

The **Declaration of Independence** was written to further the cause of the colonists' fight with the mother country already into its second year. Although the Declaration was impelled by a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind", it was really addressed to those within the colonies who remained loyal to the king or were uncommitted to the cause of independence. The Declaration stated the principles of equality, the natural rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," the purpose of government to "secure those rights," and the "right of the people to alter or abolish" government when natural rights are not protected by government. It then made the case that the King, not the Parliament, had violated the rights of the colonists. The litany of actions that "He" did was designed to break the bonds between the King and his loyalist subjects and to unify the new nation against a common enemy. Students should be able to recognize these charges as references to the events that led to the outbreak of war.

By declaring their independence, the Americans made it possible to enter into an alliance with other nations, most notably France. Following the Battle of Saratoga, European countries began to believe that the British colonists might be successful against the English. With this belief came French naval support and supplies. The French navy proved invaluable to victory at Yorktown.

The principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence also had an impact on the newly formed state governments (USHC 2.4) and the Articles of Confederation government (USHC 2.3) that Americans established immediately after its signing. These governments relied primarily on the role of the legislature and severely limited executive power. In the postwar period Americans began to put the principles of the Declaration into practice. States in the North passed laws that provided for the gradual emancipation of slaves. States also provided for freedom of religion. However, the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence remained unfulfilled for certain groups and the idea that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights ... [to] life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" has been a rallying cry for those denied their rights throughout American history.

The **Declaration of Independence** not only impacted the colonists' fight with the mother country but its principles had a **worldwide impact**. The French "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the

Citizen” was modeled on the American Declaration of Independence and led to revolutionary movements throughout Europe in the 1800s. Revolutions in Latin America in the 1800s and countless groups fighting for the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” and justifying the overthrow of corrupt governments have cited the American Declaration of Independence.

**It is not essential for students to know:**

It is not necessary for students to remember the debates that preceded the signing of the Declaration or which states or statesmen immediately supported it and which were more reluctant. It is not necessary to know that the Declaration was the work of a committee of which Thomas Jefferson was the most important member. It is not necessary for students to know about the role of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” in laying the groundwork for the Declaration or that the principles embodied in it rest on the ideas of John Locke written in support of the Glorious Revolution in England in 1689. It is not necessary for students to remember the various battles of the American Revolution.

**Assessment guidelines:**

Appropriate assessments would require students to **explain** the importance of the Declaration of Independence in establishing the reasons for separation and convincing reluctant patriots to join in opposition to the Crown. Students need to be able to **summarize** the principles upon which Americans based their justification for the Revolution and upon which other groups throughout the world based their claims for “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Students should be able to **interpret** short selections of the document and **infer** which acts of the British government that violated American rights were being cited in portions of the document.